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POSTS FOR PAO

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SUBJECT: MISSION HOSTS FIRST IFTAR DINNER

1. On October 20, 2005, Embassy The Hague Charge d'Affaires Blakeman hosted a well-received Iftar dinner at the Charge's residence, the first ever by the Mission. Forty-five key contacts attended, including many Dutch Muslim leaders. The Charge read President Bush's Ramadan message to the gathered, and the PAO read it in Dutch. The largest Dutch Moroccan television outlet in the Netherlands filmed the Iftar for a ten-minute Arabic language report that will reach many Muslims in the greater Amsterdam region. The TV crew filmed interviews with the Charge, Consul General, and Moroccan ambassador, who praised the Mission for hosting the Iftar.

2. The Moroccan ambassador offered the prayer to break the fast at sundown. Besides the Moroccan ambassador, the Iftar drew the ambassadors of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates, the DCMs of Turkey, India and Pakistan, as well as three Dutch Muslim Members of Parliament. The chairmen of the two largest Dutch Muslim umbrella organizations, the CMO and CGI, attended, as did the leader of the advisory body "Islam and Citizenship." Other guests represented the Dutch MFA, Ministry of Justice, Muslim student organizations, Muslim NGOs, universities, and think tanks. Among the Muslim guests were twelve International Visitor program alumni.

3. All guests commended the U.S. Mission for celebrating an Iftar as part of our public diplomacy outreach. When leaving, one Arab ambassador noted, "I'd like to see the guest list because you had all the important people here."
BLAKEMAN